

# The Zionist origins of Islam

Richard Preschel  
©2021

**Abstract:** In the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, an army led by Ebionites - a Jewish Christian Messianic apocalyptic and eschatological movement - conquered Jerusalem and rebuilt a YHVH Temple expecting the second coming of Jesus (*Parousia*). After a few years of vain expectation, the belief in Jewish Messiah was abandoned and replaced by a new religious military project that gave origin to Islam.

**Keywords:** Islam origins, Zionism, Byzantines, Sasanians, Heraclius, Temple Mount, Holy Land, Jerusalem, Late Antiquity, Jewish Christians, Qur'an, Ebionites, Nazareans, Judaism, Christianity.

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>I. Who were the Ebionites?</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>II. Ebionite Beliefs and Practices</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>III. Sources about the Ebionites</b>	<b>11</b>
1. The Qur'an	12
1.a. General considerations	12
1.b. Ebionite general contents	13
1.c. Ebionite Zionist contents	15
2. Ebionite (low) Christology in the inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock	15
3. The text plagiarized by Abd al-Jabbar	17
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>22</b>

# Introduction

Late Antiquity was no age of reason. It is hard to imagine a period more favorable to apocalyptic and eschatological<sup>1</sup> ideas than the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The intermittent but extremely destructive military campaigns that opposed the exhausted Sasanian<sup>2</sup> and Byzantine empires, during 400 years, reached their climax and conclusion in this period. Especially in the Levant, the main scene of these disastrous wars, the instability, insecurity and all sorts of hardships that the populations suffered, exacerbated the religious feelings in which people sought some sort of comfort and understanding, some light of order in that tunnel of chaos where all hoped for a way out.

The territorial shifts between both empires also created opportunities that awakened appetites for power and freedom among the oppressed nations, especially for Arabs and Jews.

In the year 614 the Sasanian king Shahrbaraz conquered Cesaria. Two different Jewish movements, one rabbinical coming from Galilee, another Ebionite coming from Transjordan, converged in an assault to free Jerusalem (HOYLAND, 1997 p.528), a city from which the Byzantines had banned them since the defeat of the Bar Kokhba revolt in 136.

To the surprise of the rabbinical Jews, the Ebionites took possession of the Temple Mount and tried to rebuild the Temple in the hope of provoking the second coming of Jesus. The rabbinical Jews quickly expelled the Ebionites and, under Sasanian rule, kept control of Jerusalem and many portions of the Holy Land until 617, when the rulers reversed their policy and gave back the control of these areas to the Christians.

---

<sup>1</sup> From the Greek ἐσχατος *eschatos* meaning "last" and -logy meaning "the study of", regarding the end of History and the final destiny of humankind.

<sup>2</sup> Dynasty that ruled the Persian empire from 224 to 651.

In the year 622 the Byzantine emperor Heraclius starts a campaign to reconquer the lands lost to the Sasanians. Heraclius also decrees the forced conversion of all Jews living under his rule. In 630 Jerusalem falls again under Byzantine rule.

In the meantime many Ebionite Jews migrate south, to Arabia, spread their Zionist teaching to the locals and gather an army to conquer Jerusalem, rebuild the Temple and receive Jesus the Messiah in his second coming. In 629, taking advantage of the raging wars between Sasanian and Byzantines, they try to conquer Jerusalem but are stopped and bitterly defeated by the Byzantines in Mu'tah, southeast of the Dead Sea. Somewhere between 635 and 637 their Zionist plan partly succeeds: aided by the surviving rabbinical Jews<sup>3</sup>, they reconquer Jerusalem, clean up the war debris in the Temple Mount and build there, on the place that Christians called the Capitol, a rectangular structure like the Holy of Hollies of the YHWH Temple (Hoyleland, *ibid.* p.48).

Little is known the ritual practices in this newly (re)built structure:

*“...the shrine and its Rock were served by three hundred ritual attendants, as well as two hundred gatekeepers, ten for each of its gates, and a staff of Jews and Christians who cleaned the sanctuary and provided glass and wicks for its lamps and goblets. The Dome was open for public worship only on Mondays and Thursdays<sup>4</sup>; on other days only its attendants were allowed inside. The rituals for these two days commenced the evening before, the customary beginning of the day in Jewish and Christian liturgical time, as the Dome’s attendants prepared a complex perfume that would sit overnight. On Monday and Thursday morning the attendants purified themselves with ritual washing and put on special ceremonial garments. Following these preparations, they rubbed the sacred Rock at the Dome’s center with perfume”*

---

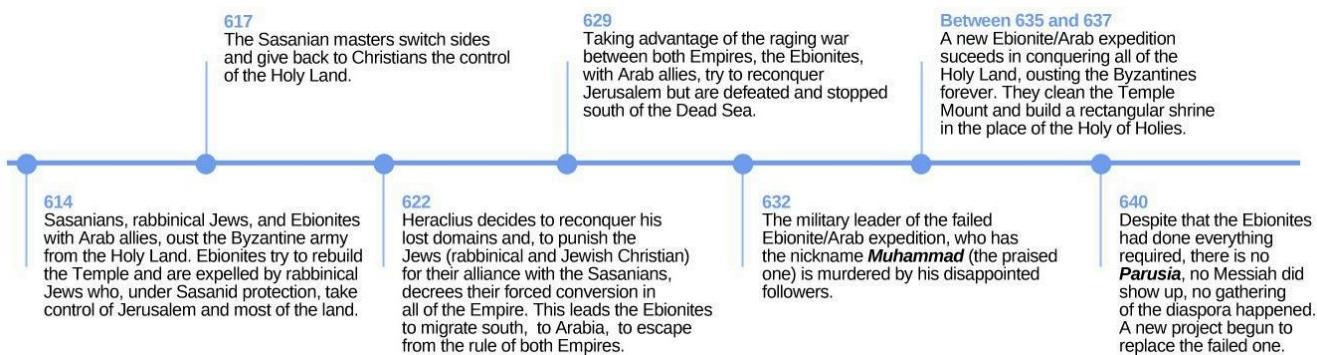
<sup>3</sup> Who under the Byzantine threat, put aside their theological differences with the Ebionites .

<sup>4</sup> In Judaism, Monday and Thursday are the days of public Torah readings. See **Mishnah Megillah** 1:3, **Talmud Bavli Baba-Kamma** 82a: 3 and 5,. The choice of these two weekdays is explained by the fact that those were market days when rural dwellers came to the cities where synagogues are located.

*and burned incense all around it, thereafter lowering the curtains that surrounded the Rock “so that the incense encircles the Šakhra [the Rock] entirely and the odour [of the incense] clings to it.” Once the Rock and its surroundings were suffused with intense fragrance, the curtains were lifted, and a crier went out to the market calling the faithful to come to the Rock for prayer. The public was then allowed in to pray in the presence of the sacred Rock and its intense fragrance, but only for a brief time, allowing for just two prayer cycles or perhaps at most four... ”* (SHOEMAKER pp. 14-15)

Despite all efforts, the last and most important part of the Ebionite plan isn't accomplished: there is no second coming of Jesus the Messiah<sup>5</sup>.

By 640, having lost Jewish Messianic, apocalyptic and eschatological hopes, most of the Ebionites ceased to exist as such but laid the foundations of a new conquering religion called Islam.



What follows is a little essay aiming to elucidate who were these little known Zionists from Late Antiquity, how they related to other Jews and how they contributed to the birth of Islam.

<sup>5</sup> Sebeos (7<sup>th</sup> century), Armenian bishop and historian, relates these events in chapters 24 and 31 of his *History*. Adamnan (624 – 704), Irish abbot, in *De Locis Sanctis* describes the rectangular structure built on the Temple site. These and more references in HOYLAND (1997) and SHOEMAKER.

## I. Who were the Ebionites?

Judaism was never as monolithic as yesterday's and today's orthodox rabbis wrongly pretend. Even the concept of *orthodoxy* was imported by rabbis from Christianity, where it originated in the 325 council of Nicea (BOYARIN).

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century Josephus depicted a plurality of religious movements in the Land of Israel: Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, Essenes. In the Hellenistic diaspora the Alexandrian Judaism, with Philo as its main exponent, was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy, in other parts of Egypt were the ascetic Therapeuts, and in the Nile island of Elephantine, a big garrison of Jewish mercenaries built a YHWH Temple in which other popular deities were included.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries Judaism was a spectrum (BOYARIN) where in the extremes where Jews that completely ignored Jesus and Christians that completely ignored Judaism, and between these extremes there were, to different degrees, Jews that recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

These *Messianic Jews* formed a wide variety of Christians who did not consider Christianity to be a religion that abrogated Judaism. However, they can be very grossly classified in two main categories:

- The **Nazarenes** shared with the gentile Christians the same beliefs in the divinity of Jesus: As the divine Son of God, the Holy Trinity, His birth from a virgin <sup>6</sup> but rejected the teachings of Paul regarding the abolition of the Law. They were Christians that kept the Torah and its commandments.

---

<sup>6</sup> This is **high Christology**. The same as most Christian Churches adopted since the 1<sup>st</sup> Council of Nicaea (325).

→ The **Ebionites** believed that Jesus was the Messiah as taught in the Jewish scriptures, he was a human being and his agenda was political<sup>7</sup>, that is, to reinstate Jewish sovereignty with the House of David at its head. They also kept the Torah and its commandments

Authors of antiquity confound or use indistinctly the terms **Nazarene** or **Ebionite** applied to Jews that had some sort of belief in Jesus.

About the Nazarenes, Jerome in 404, wrote: “*they desire to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither the one nor the other.*”<sup>8</sup>

The Nazarenes subsisted well into the Middle Ages. They coexisted with Ebionites and rabbinical Jews in the Land of Israel and other areas of the Roman Empire.

The Ebionites were of two types: Pharisee and Essene<sup>9</sup>.

The Pharisee Ebionites were very similar to the rabbinical Jews, only the belief in Jesus as messiah separated them from the Jewish mainstream.

The Essene Ebionites had Gnostic and ascetic influences. They were active missionaries. They had a critical approach towards the Torah and the Tanakh. Moreover, they forbade the consumption of wine and, as we will show, had many conceptions that will later appear in the Qur'an.

The Pharisee Ebionites eventually came back in the fold of mainstream Judaism.

---

<sup>7</sup> This is **low Christology** believed, among others, by Ebionites, Elchasaites, Sabeans and Muslims.

<sup>8</sup> **Letter to Augustine** 4:13

<sup>9</sup> WATTERMAN makes this distinction.

The Essene Ebionites were the actual Ebionites. The word *Ebionite* from the Hebrew אַבְיוֹנִים, transliterated Ἔβιωναῖοι in Greek, meaning *poor* or *needy*, is one of the names the Essene gave themselves<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> All Jewish movements, rabbinical, Samaritan, Christian, Karaite, etc. mainly call themselves *Israelites*, *Bnei Israel* or something equivalent.

## II. Ebionite Beliefs and Practices

The Ebionites were also a plural movement. Their geographical dispersion, due to the Jewish defeats in 70, 115-117 and 132-136, contributed to this. They had a horizontal organization, no hierarchy, no private property, baptized by water, did not consume wine and didn't marry or share meals with people not belonging to their faith.

**Jesus:** He was a human being, son of Joseph and Mary. Like the *Acts of the Apostles* attest, he had siblings, among them James, head of the first church. He became messiah by his merits (hassidut) and was adopted by God when John baptized him. They believed in his physical resurrection. He was as well a spiritual than a political leader, like Moses. He would re-establish the Jewish sovereignty in the Holy Land and give the Torah to all humanity.

**Torah and scriptures:** They considered that Moses' revelation was oral and he transmitted it to 70 elders that transcribed them, and in this process many things were added that don't belong to the original revelation. From the *Pentateuch* they rejected all the pericopes<sup>11</sup> containing:

→ **Anthropopathies**<sup>12</sup>: Like Genesis 6:9 (ignorance), 6:32 (jealousy), 6:6 (regret), 18:21 (descent), 22:1 (putting Abraham to test), Exodus 3:21, 11:2, 12:35 (telling the Hebrews to “borrow” properties from the Egyptians), 19:16 (blasting a horn).

→ **Polytheism**: Like Genesis 3:22 (“Now that the man has become like one of us...”), 3:5 (... you will be like gods -*כְּאֱלֹהִים*-), Deuteronomy 10:17 (God of gods *הָאֱלֹהִים*-*הָאֱלֹהֵי* *הַוָּא*-*אֶלְ�הִי*).<sup>13</sup>

→ **Prophets**: Little regard for the prophets, the only truly prophetic ones being Adam, Moses and Jesus. They didn't recognize Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. (Epiphanius *Panarion*, quoted by RONCAGLIA and CRONE 2016)

---

<sup>11</sup> An extract from a text, especially a passage from the Bible.

<sup>12</sup> The attribution of human emotions to a god.

→ **Animal sacrifices:** They rejected all commandments pertaining to animal sacrifices. They were vegetarians and depicted John the Baptist and Jesus as being such.

However, they considered that the Law of Moses was binding to all humans. They recognized only one gospel, *The Gospel of the Hebrews* that was a short version of Mathew's gospel, where the genealogy and virgin birth are excluded and that begins with Jesus' baptism by John.

Some practices and beliefs compared.			
Practice/Belief	Ebionites	Rabbinical	Mainstream Christians
<b>Week holyday</b>	Shabbat	Shabbat	Sunday
<b>Passover</b>	14th Nissan	14th Nissan	Sunday after 14th Nissan
<b>Baptism with water</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Circumcision</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Direction of prayer</b>	Jerusalem	Jerusalem	East
<b>Jesus</b>	Messiah	False prophet	Messiah
<b>Use of wine</b>	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Forbidden foods</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Yom Kippur observance</b>	Yes	Yes	No

The Ebionites considered themselves simultaneously the only true Jews and the only true Christians. Jerome ridiculed them, saying that they were neither the one nor the other. He couldn't suspect that this hybrid belief system would three centuries have such a great influence.

### III. Sources about the Ebionites

No Ebionite writings have been handed down to us, with the probable exception of fragments of the Greek translation of the **Pentateuch** by Symmachus <sup>13</sup>, the so called **Pseudo-Clementines** <sup>14</sup> and a text plagiarized by Abd al-Jabbar <sup>15</sup>, everything stated above about the beliefs and practices is known from indirect sources:

- a) The Christian apologetic texts from the first three centuries by Eusebius, Irenaeus, Origen, Epiphanius and Hippolytus. (Stecke, Schoeps)
- b) On the Muslim side, the **Qur'an** is mainly composed by Ebionite texts from a lectionary <sup>16</sup> (Gilliot). The inscriptions in the inner walls of the Dome of the Rock that are a manifesto of Ebionite Christology <sup>17</sup>. The text plagiarized by Abd al-Jabbar is rich in information on how the Ebionites saw the other Christians.

The rabbis back then, as well as today, adopted the strategy of ignoring all Jewish movements that don't abide by their authority. **Ebionites** were indistinctly referred to by the terms *Minim* (מִנִּים) or *Notzrim* (נוֹצְרִים) <sup>18</sup>. They are despised, banned and cursed, but their beliefs and practices are never examined or discussed.

---

<sup>13</sup> That have survived in fragments of Origen's **Hexapla** (Ἑξαπλά) that included, in six parallel columns, the Hebrew text in Hebrew letters, the Hebrew text phonetically transliterated in Greek letters, the Septuagint, and the Greek translations of Aquila, Theodosius and Symmachus.

Origen was born in Alexandria and composed the *Hexapla* in Cesaria before 245.

<sup>14</sup> Early Jewish Christian non canonical (apocryphal) texts dating from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

<sup>15</sup> Muslim historian and theologian. Lived between 935 and 1025.

<sup>16</sup> A Jewish Christian prayer book containing Bible inspired texts.

<sup>17</sup> **Christology:** The beliefs relating to the human or divine nature of Jesus, his virgin birth, etc.

<sup>18</sup> In modern Hebrew Christians are called **notzrim** (נוֹצְרִים).

# 1. The Qur'an

## 1.a. General considerations

The Qur'an is an ambiguous<sup>19</sup>, disorderly<sup>20</sup> composition, with 2500 linguistic and stylistic errors<sup>21</sup>, written in a northern Arabic of Syria or Iraq<sup>22</sup> with a considerable amount of loan-words from Aramaic and Hebrew, collecting contents coming mainly from Ebionite sources<sup>23</sup>.

There are many doubts about the original sense of words and sentences in the Qur'an because, in the oldest manuscripts, the Arabic letters lack dots and diacritical marks, thus 23 of the 28 Arabic letters have an uncertain reading.

There are no fewer doubts about the integrity of the text: Some Shiite scholars affirm that many passages of the Qur'an have been suppressed or altered, especially those referring to Ali. Even more accusations of this type are made by Sunnite scholars<sup>24</sup>.

Last but not least, the grammar and vocabulary of many portions is simply defective. As the Qur'an is supposed to be God's perfect and unaltered word, created, or even uncreated (!), before the creation of the world<sup>25</sup>, most believers seek deeply hidden mystical values in the typos, mistakes and plain

---

<sup>19</sup> LUXEMBERG finds that a quarter of the text is ambiguous.

<sup>20</sup> The chapters (called *surat*) are usually classified more or less in the decreasing order of their length and doesn't consider the chronology and thematic coherence of the text. ALDEEB says that the order of the chapters is upside down.

<sup>21</sup> Listed and counted by ALDEEB.

<sup>22</sup> It's supposed to be written in the different Arabic of the Hijaz (western present Saudi Arabia). See KERR.

<sup>23</sup> CRONE 2015, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> ALDEEB gives the references.

<sup>25</sup> The rabbis share this unhistorical, non-factual and plain nonsensical belief regarding the Torah (see BOYARIN, *Talmud Bavli Shabbat* 88b, *Pesachim* 54:a, *Midrash Tanhuma Vayeshev*: 4, *Avot D'Rabbi Natan* 31:3). Whereas the Muslim concept is a pre-existent, uncreated Qur'an, the Torah is clearly understood to have been created.

gibberish it contains. An exception to this rule is Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), who cautiously wrote: “*The men around Muhammad [and the following generations that imitated them] wrote the Koran in their own script, which was not of a firmly established good quality*”<sup>26</sup>.

### 1.b. Ebionite general contents

The *Qur'an* for its greater part is composed by extracts of an Ebionite lectionary originally written in Aramaic and Hebrew<sup>27</sup>.

Patricia Crone (2015) demonstrates that four Qur'anic themes are extremely hard to explain without the hypothesis of an Ebionite contribution:

1. The Qur'anic Jesus is a prophet sent to the Israelites, not to the gentiles.
2. The Israelites appear to include Christians.
3. The Messenger sees Jesus as second in importance to Moses and as charged with confirmation of the Torah.
4. The Messenger insists that Jesus was only a human being, not the son of God.

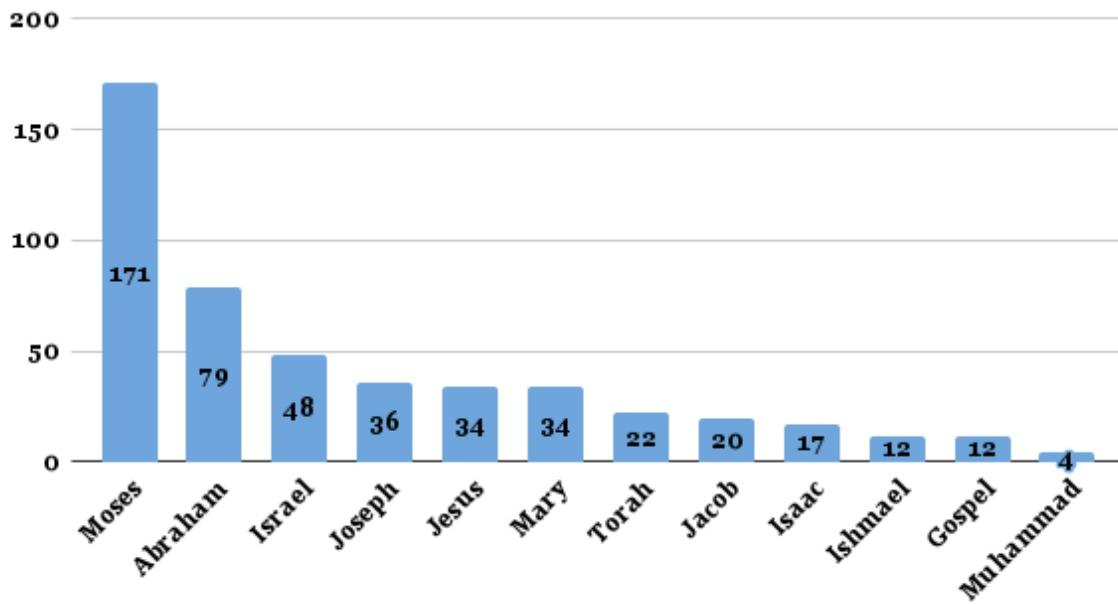
Ebionite Jewish Christian vocabulary and themes are the most conspicuous characteristic of the Qur'an. A simple quantitative approach is sufficient to show this:

---

<sup>26</sup> [Muqaddimah](#). Also [Edip Yuksel and Sami Aldeeb about the Koran](#).

<sup>27</sup> See KERR and DYE. VOLLERS holds that, contrary to the traditional views, many parts of the Qur'an were not transmitted orally and came from previously existing texts. This confirms GILLIOT's hypothesis of an Ebionite lectionary.

## Frequency of certain names in the Qur'an



It's interesting to observe the difference between both extremes, Moses 171 occurrences and Muhammad only 4<sup>28</sup>.

If the *Qur'an* was “sent down” and “revealed” in Arabic -there are 11 occurrences for the word “Arabic- why does it mention more the ancestors of the Jews, Issac - 17 -, Jacob - 20, +1 as Israel [19:24] - more than the ancestor of the Arabs, Ishmael - 12 -?

<sup>28</sup> Qur'an critical scholars like ALDEEB and IBN WARRAQ don't exclude the possibility that these very few occurrences are late interpolations.

## 1.c. Ebionite Zionist contents

Zionism is not only the Jewish national political movement that was founded by Herzl at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Zionism is the Jewish aspiration to sovereignty in the Land of Israel that has existed since the Babylonian exile (538 BCE), the Maccabean revolt (164 BCE), the revolts against Trajan (115–117) and Hadrian (132-136), those of the 7<sup>th</sup> century treated here, through the Middle Ages <sup>29</sup> and Modern Age movements like the 18th-19th century Haskalah that reflected the intensity of Jewish nationalism.

Moreover, Zionism is not exclusive to rabbinical Jews, some are anti-Zionist, also Karaites have returned to Israel. So there is no reason not to consider Zionist the Ebionite movement that from 614 sought to conquer the Holy Land.

5:21. O my people! Enter the holy land that God prescribed for you, and do not turn the back. ~ Then you will turn back losers <sup>30</sup>.

17:104. We said, after him, to the children of Israel: «Reside the land. When the promise of the last life comes, we shall bring you all joined together»<sup>31</sup>.

---

<sup>29</sup> Nahmanides (13<sup>th</sup> century) makes the return to the Land of Israel a religious obligation.

يَا قَوْمَ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَرْنَثُوا عَلَى أَذْبَارِنَمْ فَتَنَقْبِلُو حَاسِرِينَ

<sup>30</sup> وَقُلْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ لِيَنْبِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اسْكُنُوهُمْ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ جِئْنَا بِكُمْ لِفِيقًا

## **2. Ebionite (low) Christology in the inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock**

In 685, the quadrangular structure of the Temple was transformed in an octagonal shrine. The inscriptions are considered the earliest epigraphic proclamation of Islam and actually the first time that the word “Islam” (الإسلام) occurs.

**Inner face (Southeast):** “O people of the Book, do not exaggerate in your religion”

**Inner face (East):** “and only say the truth about God. The Messiah Jesus son of Mary was only a messenger of God, and His word which He committed to Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers and do not say "three;" refrain,”

**Inner face (Northeast):** “it is better for you. God is only one god; he is too exalted to have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and on the earth. God suffices as a defender”

**Inner face (North):** “The Messiah will never disdain to be God's servant, nor will the favoured angels. Whoever disdains to serve Him and is proud, He will gather them all to Him

O God, incline unto your messenger and your servant Jesus son of Mary”

**Inner face (Northwest):** “Peace on him the day he was born and the day he dies and the day he shall be raised alive

Such was Jesus son of Mary a statement of the truth concerning which they are in doubt. It is not for God to take a son, glory be to Him.”

### 3. The text plagiarized by Abd al-Jabbar

The main objection raised against the hypothesis of the Ebionite influence and participation in the origin of Islam is that, after the 4<sup>th</sup> century, western Christian authors considered them to have disappeared.

As proof to the contrary, Patricia Crone (2015,2016) examined an apocryphal Coptic text dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> century, found in 1910 in a monastery in Egypt, called *On the Life and the Passion of Christ* falsely attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem. This text debates the low Christological views of Jewish Christians living at that time in Egypt. Crone sees that this fact allows to suppose that there is no reason to exclude that, at that time, they also were present in Arabia <sup>32</sup>.

Why don't we have a trace of anything pre-Islamic in Arabia, the supposed cradle of Islam?

The answer is in the Islamic concept of *time of ignorance* (*jahiliyyah* الجاهلية) that occurs 5 times in the *Qur'an* (3:33, 3:154, 48:26 and 5:50) and implies that all that existed before the *Qur'an* revelation should be destroyed <sup>33</sup>. Since the time of caliph Umar, who ruled from 634 to 644, all the past documents, statues and inscriptions were destroyed. All Christians and Jews were killed or expelled. It was the most thorough ethnical and cultural cleansing one can imagine.

---

<sup>32</sup> “All in all, a full seven doctrines, several of them central to the Qur’ān, point to the presence of Jewish Christians in the Messenger’s locality, and since they are attested in Egypt in the seventh century, there is nothing particularly hazardous about postulating that they were present in Arabia too.”

<sup>33</sup> This destruction is an ongoing process in most Muslim countries.

This Islamic compulsion to destroy everything that is alien to its beliefs persists in the present, take the Taliban in 2001 with the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan and ISIL's destruction of archaeological treasures of Palmyra in 2015<sup>34</sup>.

In the whole Arabian Peninsula, only in Yemen and in the Persian Gulf coast can be found some rests of pre-Islamic culture.

Shlomo Pines<sup>35</sup> studied a treatise, preserved in an unique manuscript in Istanbul since 1557, written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by the Iranian theologian Abd al-Jabbar (935-125) with the title *Tathbit Dala'il Nubuwat Sayyidina Muhammad, The Establishment of Proofs for the Prophethood of Our Master Mohammed*.

Pines looked at the chapter on Christianity, and found that the subject-matter and the approach bore little similarity to the ordinary Muslim anti-Christian polemics. Pines grasped these were not, and could not by any means be, texts of Muslim origin. That they could only derive from a Jewish Christian community and were rather maladroitly and carelessly adapted by 'Abd al-Jabbar for his own purposes.

---

<sup>34</sup> The program of ISIL also states the destruction of Egypt's pyramids.

<sup>35</sup> (1908-1990) was an Israeli scholar of Jewish and Islamic philosophy, best known for his English translation of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*.

These texts, composed not earlier than the 7<sup>th</sup> century, basically contain:

- An attack on the Christians for having abandoned the commandments of the Torah and having adopted different laws and customs.
- Polemics against the dogmas of high Christology.
- An outline of the early history of Christianity, or at least of certain notable events which are part of this history.
- A hostile biography of Saint Paul.

## Conclusion

Ernest Renan, 170 years ago, confidently pronounced that **Islam was born in the full light of history**<sup>36</sup>. This unfortunate sentence, that couldn't be wronger, has been adopted as true by many. As a matter of fact, it is tempting to believe in it because Islam is the youngest of the so-called *great religions*. But the facts are different.

Ibn Ishaq, the earliest historian of Islam, was born around 704, seventy years after the death of Muhammad, he must have written his biography of the Prophet at least **hundred years** after his death. And from Ibn Ishaq we only know some fragments quoted by Ibn Hisham, who died **two hundred years** (in 833) after the death of Muhammad. The earliest Hadith's, that are supposed to record the memories about Muhammad recalled by his companions, date from 822, **one hundred and ninety years** after the death of the Prophet. The Muslim official narrative says that all this information existed in oral tradition before being written. But nothing is less reliable than oral tradition<sup>37</sup>.

Let's compare with Christianity. The earliest text are the ***Letter to Thessalonians 1 and 2*** written by Paul in the year 50, around **17 or 20 years** after Jesus' death. Paul doesn't give us any biographical information about Jesus. The earliest gospel, that of Mark, was written around 66-70. The ***Acts of the Apostles***, around 85-90. There is a period of at least 17 years after the death of Jesus about which historians know absolutely nothing.

---

<sup>36</sup> *Mahomet et les origines de l'islamisme*, in *Revue des deux mondes* (1851), p. 1065

<sup>37</sup> See e.g. the debate between historians Benny Morris and Ilan Pape about the unreliability of oral reports of events occurred in 1948.

About Buddha, we don't even know when he lived. Somewhere between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. There is nothing historical about Moses and the Hebrew patriarchs.

We have to accept that the origins of Islam are sunk in the deepest darkness, and so are the influences of the Ebionites that we have explored. There is much that speaks in favor of the Ebionite hypothesis, we believe that it is the most plausible but, as Patricia Crone said, it is no more than a conjecture.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALDEEB,S. (2016) **The Koran: Arabic text with the English translation**, Amazon
- ARENTE, J.W. (1924) **Muhammad und die Prophetie**, in Acta Orientalia II
- BOYARIN, D. (2004) **Borderlines: The partition of Judaeo-Christianity**, Penn
- BRADFORD, B.C. (2013) **The Qur'anic Jesus: A Study of Parallels with Non-Biblical Texts**, ScholarWorks at WMU
- CARLSON, D. (2013) **Jewish-Christian Interpretation of the Pentateuch in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies**, Fortress
- CRONE, P. (2015) **Jewish Christianity and the Qur'ān (Part One)** in Journal of Near Eastern Studies Vol. 74, No. 2
- CRONE, P. (2016) **Jewish Christianity and the Qur'ān (Part Two)** in Journal of Near Eastern Studies Vol. 75, No. 1
- DAUPHIN, C. (1993) **De l'Eglise de La Circoncision a l'Eglise de La Gentilite**, Notre-Dame Center de Jérusalem
- DYE, G. (2019) **Le corpus coranique. Questions autour de sa canonisation.** in "Le Coran des historiens", Cerf
- GILLIOT, G. (2013) **Le Coran avant le Coran** in AZAIEZ. M. edit. "Le Coran: Nouvelles approches.", CNRS
- HARNACK, A. (1909) **Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte**. Tübingen
- HOYLAND, R.G. (1997) **Seeing Islam as Others Saw It**, Darwin Press
- HOYLAND, R.G. (2015) **In God's path : the Arab conquests and the creation of an Islamic empire**, Oxford
- IBN WARRAQ (1995), **Why I Am Not a Muslim**, Prometheus
- KAEGI, W. E. (2003). **Heraclius: emperor of Byzantium**. Cambridge University Press
- KERR, R. (2012) **Von der aramäischen Lesekultur zur aramäischen Schreibkultur II: Der aramäische Wortschatz des Koran** in GROSS,M. and OHLIG, K. eds., "Die Entstehung einer Weltreligion II: Von der koranischen Bewegung zum Frühislam", Schiler
- LAFONTAINE, O. (2015) **Le grand secret de l'Islam**, Amazon
- LUXEMBERG, C. (2000) **Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran.**, Schiler
- MARCUS, M. (2008) **Jewish Christianity** in "The Cambridge History of Christianity Vol. I"
- NEVO, Y., KOREN, J. (2003) **Crossroads to Islam : the origins of the Arab religion and the Arab state.** Prometheus
- PINES, S. (1966). **The Jewish Christians Of The Early Centuries Of Christianity According To A New Source.** Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities II, No. 13.

- RONCAGLIA, M.P. (1971) **Elements Ebionites et Elkésaïtes dans le Coran**, Proche Orient Chrétien 21
- SCHOEPS, H-J. (1953) **Ebionite Christianity**. The Journal of Theological Studies, New Series, Vol. 4, No. 2
- SHOEMAKER, S.J. (2021) **A prophet has appeared**, University of California
- STECKE, G. (1953) **Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen**, Akademie Verlag
- STROUMSA, G.G. (2014) **Jewish Christianity and Islamic Origins** in “*Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts*”, Brill
- TISDAL, W.S-C. (1905) **The Original Sources of the Qur'an**. Society for promoting Christian knowledge
- VOLLERS, K. (1906) **Volkssprache und Schriftsprache im alten Arabien**, Trübner
- WATERMAN, L. (1897) **The Post-Apostolic Age**. Scribner